



ROOTs NEWSLETTER

“We are running out of Trees”



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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



Assistant Commissioner Forest Resources in Charge of Regulation and Utilization MWE, Chairman technical committee ROOTS Campaign initiative

On behalf of the Running Out Of Trees campaign (ROOTs) Chairman who is also the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) Dr Alfred Okot Okidi, it gives me great pleasure to share with you this September 2026 edition of the Running Out of Trees (ROOTs) Campaign Newsletter,

As we reflect on the progress of the ROOTs Campaign, we are reminded that restoring Uganda's forests and increasing tree cover is not simply about planting trees, it is about nurturing a lasting culture of environmental stewardship.



The progress being made across the country demonstrates what is possible when communities are empowered to take ownership of restoration. From schools establishing woodlots and food forests to farmers adopting Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and agroforestry, these initiatives are turning environmental conservation into practical action that supports livelihoods and strengthens resilience to climate change.

As Government, we recognise that successful restoration requires more than distributing seedlings. It requires quality planting material, innovations around planting spaces, appropriate species selection, good management practices, technical guidance, monitoring and, most importantly, sustained care of planted and naturally regenerated trees.

The ROOTs Campaign therefore calls upon all Ugandans to move beyond the act of planting and embrace the responsibility of growing and protecting trees to maturity. Every tree that survives represents an investment in soil and water conservation, biodiversity, climate resilience and future economic opportunities.



I commend my colleagues at the Ministry of Water and Environment, the ROOTs Secretariat at Environment Alert, local governments, communities, schools, development partners, private-sector actors and all citizens contributing to this national effort.

As we continue this journey, let us remember that the Uganda we want tomorrow depends on the environmental choices we make today. Let us plant wisely, nurture diligently and protect our forests and trees as a shared national responsibility, “one tree at a time”.

Chairman, ROOTs Campaign Technical Committee





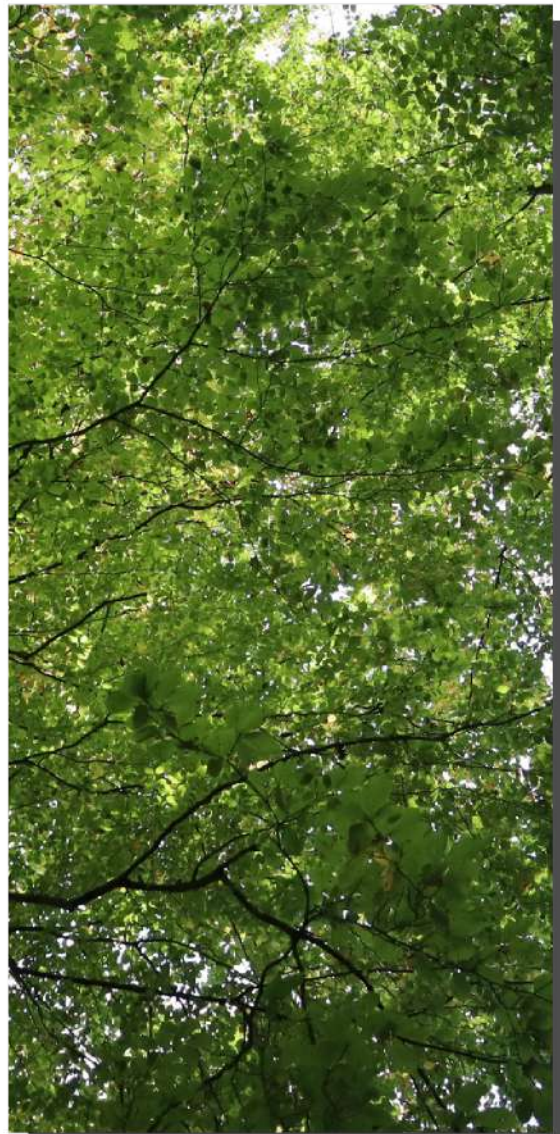
EDITOR'S NOTE

Editor's Note: Building a Stronger, Smarter and More Accountable Forestry Sector

Uganda's forestry sector is entering a period of strengthened coordination, scientific innovation and evidence-based management, with several initiatives under the Government of Uganda - European Union Forest Partnership and the Partnering for Forests Development (P4F) Programme addressing different but interconnected aspects of forest governance.

From reviewing Standard Forestry Practices (SFP) to developing an Automated National Land Use/Land Cover and Land Use Balance Sheet, Uganda is investing in systems that can improve how forests and other natural resources are planned, monitored and managed. The SFP review seeks to establish a national benchmark for good forestry practice and professionalise the sector. As Issa Katwesige, Assistant Commissioner for Forestry Resources in charge of Regulation and Utilization at the Ministry of Water and Environment and National Project Coordinator for P4F, noted, "The document will guide forestry standards, professionalize the forestry sector and help start a professional forestry body in Uganda."

At the same time, technology is strengthening oversight. Training in Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) is equipping forestry officers, district local governments, civil society and P4F Secretariat staff with digital tools such as EarthRanger to collect and map field information. Bob Kazungu, Assistant Commissioner in Charge of Forest Resources at MWE, emphasised the importance of transparency, saying, “Government of Uganda wants transparency in all it does so that accountability to all stakeholders is smooth, including in the forestry sector.”



Science is also becoming an important part of enforcement. Uganda's National Timber and Wildlife Forensic Laboratory in Entebbe can analyse 74 timber species, supported by a growing DNA database. The laboratory provides scientific evidence that can help establish timber species and test claims against documentation.

Together, these initiatives illustrate a broader shift, from managing forests through isolated interventions to building an interconnected system of standards, mapping, monitoring, science, enforcement and accountability.

Supported by the European Union and its partners, the P4F Programme is helping connect these elements, strengthening Uganda's capacity to protect, restore and sustainably manage its forests while supporting livelihoods and responsible forest-based development.

Walukamba Aldon
Editor, ROOTs Newsletter



UGANDA REVIEWS STANDARD FORESTRY PRACTICES TO STRENGTHEN THE SECTOR

The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) has commenced a two-day review of Uganda's Standard Forestry Practices (SFP), aimed at strengthening forestry standards, improving professional practice and supporting effective forest management across the country.

The review, held at Choate Hotel in Kampala, brings together forestry officers and the Secretariat of the Partnering for Forests Development project with support under the Forestry Partnership funded by the European Union (EU) and its partners.

Forestry Consultant Steven Nsiita is guiding participants through the SFP review process, including its technical content, structure and proposed implementation mechanisms.



Issa Katwesige, Assistant Commissioner for Forestry Resources in charge of Regulation and Utilization at MWE and National Project Coordinator for Partnering for Forests Development, said the reviewed document will provide a national benchmark for good forestry practice.

“The document will guide forestry standards, professionalize the forestry sector and help start a professional forestry body in Uganda,” Katwesige said.

The SFP is designed to provide practical guidance to forest management institutions, government agencies, practitioners and training institutions. It covers forest management, plantation development, conservation, harvesting and processing, governance, climate considerations and supporting areas such as finance, policy, legal compliance and human-resource management.

The review also seeks to ensure that Uganda’s forestry practices remain aligned with national laws, policies and international standards while allowing practitioners to innovate and adopt higher standards.

Participants are expected to agree on recommendations and actions to support implementation of the revised Standard Forestry Practices as they propose the final document to MWE top policy management.

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Assistant Commissioner in Charge of Forestry Resources Utilization and Regulation Issa Katwesige explains a point



UGANDA MOVES TO DEVELOP AUTOMATED NATIONAL LAND USE AND LAND COVER BALANCE SHEET



*Edward Senyojo Principal GIS and Mapping Officer with
specialists on table*

KAMPALA, Uganda - Technical teams from the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) and the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD) have begun discussions on the preparation of an Automated National Land Use/Land Cover and Land Use Balance Sheet for Uganda, aimed at strengthening evidence-based planning and management of the country's land resources.

The meeting was held on 16 September 2026 at the MWE Headquarters in Kampala, following a directive by Cabinet under Min. No. CT2026 (2026-2031) 08.

The proposed automated national system is expected to bring together land-use and land-cover information to provide a clearer picture of how Uganda's land is being utilised and how land-use patterns are changing over time.

The initiative will bring together technical expertise from the two ministries to establish a coordinated approach to generating, analysing and updating national land-use information.



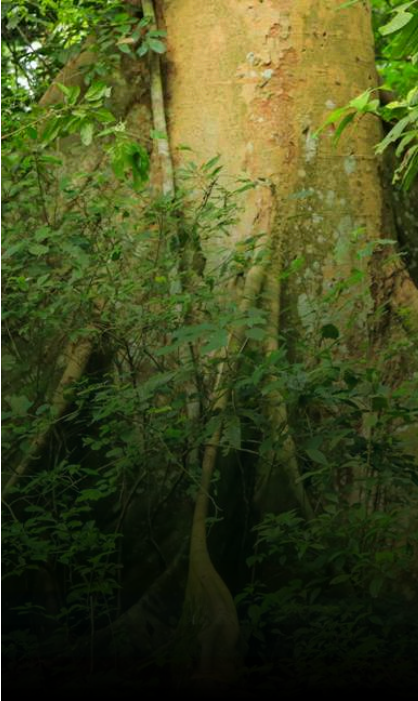
A national land-use and land-cover balance sheet can provide an important evidence base for planning by showing the distribution of different land-use categories and supporting assessment of changes in forests, agriculture, wetlands, settlements, water bodies and other land resources.

The collaboration between MWE and MLHUD is therefore expected to strengthen coordination in land-use planning and provide reliable information to support sustainable management of Uganda's natural resources, development planning and informed policy decisions.

The technical meeting marks an important step towards translating the Cabinet directive into a practical, automated system capable of supporting regular monitoring, informed decision-making and more sustainable land management across Uganda.



FROM TIMBER DUST TO DNA: HOW UGANDA'S FORENSIC LAB TRACKS ILLEGAL TIMBER



ENTEBBE, Uganda - piece of timber may look like ordinary wood, but inside its cells lies evidence that can help establish what species it belongs to and whether it matches the documentation accompanying it, according to Ministry of Water and Environment.

At Uganda's National Timber and Wildlife Forensic Laboratory in Entebbe, scientists are using DNA analysis to strengthen investigations into illegal timber trade and support enforcement of forestry laws.



DR PATRICK ILUKOL CHIYO, MANAGER OF THE NATIONAL TIMBER AND WILDLIFE FORENSIC LABORATORY EXPLAINS THE PROCESS

The laboratory has developed a timber DNA database covering 74 timber species, according to Dr Patrick Ilukol Chiyo, Manager of the National Timber and Wildlife Forensic Laboratory. The database includes 50 species identified as being illegally acquired and exported through and out of Uganda.

The development is an important step in Uganda's fight against illegal timber trade because forensic analysis can provide scientific evidence beyond visual identification.

The laboratory was upgraded by the Government of Uganda with support from the European Union funding and its partners, as part of broader efforts to strengthen forest governance, enforcement and sustainable management under the Partnering for Forests Development Programme.

The European Union has committed €40 million to Uganda's efforts to tackle deforestation and promote reforestation, improve livelihoods through promotion of forest related incomes and enhance biodiversity, with the forest partnership supporting areas including forest governance, institutional strengthening and improved capacity to investigate and prosecute forest crime.



So, what happens when a suspected illegal timber consignment reaches the laboratory?

1. The exhibit arrives with documentation

The process begins when investigators deliver a timber exhibit to the laboratory.

Laboratory analysts first examine the accompanying documentation and record information relating to the exhibit, including its identification, origin and chain of custody.

Emmanuel Muhumuza, a Laboratory Analyst, explains that protecting the exhibit from contamination or alteration is critical from the moment it is received.

The laboratory checks whether the physical timber corresponds with the documentation presented by the enforcement team, transporter or trader.

Where there is a significant discrepancy between the documentation and the physical exhibit, the investigation may be halted because the chain of custody or integrity of the evidence has been compromised.



2. A representative sample is collected

Scientists do not necessarily need an entire log or large piece of timber for DNA analysis.

Using specialised equipment, including drills, bits and appropriate cutting tools, analysts collect a small sample from the timber under controlled conditions.

The laboratory avoids unnecessarily transporting bulky exhibits, particularly where only a small quantity is required for scientific analysis.

The collected material is carefully packaged, protected and transferred for laboratory processing.

3. Scientists target the part with more DNA

Once the timber enters the laboratory, analysts examine the wood and identify suitable material for sampling.

According to Muhumuza, sapwood is particularly useful because it generally contains more viable cells and therefore provides better material for DNA extraction than older heartwood.

The first material drilled from the timber may be discarded because surface contamination, including fungi, can interfere with the analysis.



4. Timber cells are broken open

The wood sample is reduced to fine material and mixed with specialised beads.

The mixture is placed in a bead-beating machine, which vigorously agitates the sample. The purpose is to break open the cell membranes and release DNA contained within the timber cells.

This is a critical stage because the DNA must be freed from the surrounding cellular material before it can be isolated and analysed.

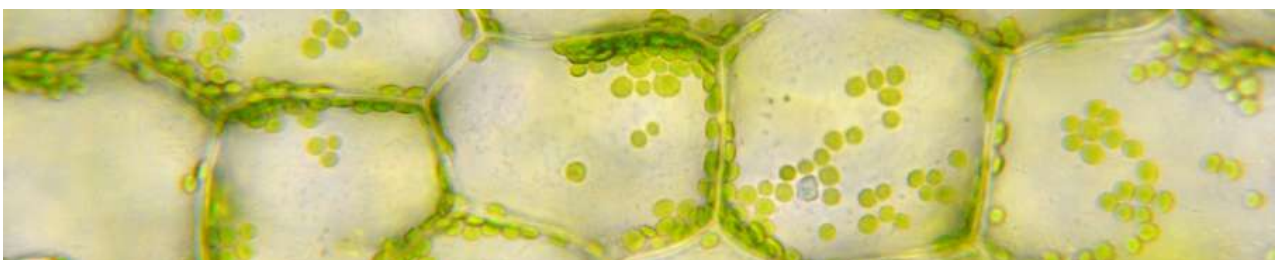
5. DNA is separated and purified

The processed sample is then subjected to centrifugation and other extraction steps.

The centrifuge helps separate the different components of the sample, while specialised extraction materials like purified laboratory water help retain the DNA and remove unwanted cellular material, proteins and other substances.

The process is repeated through several stages, at least five to progressively purify the DNA.

By the end of the extraction process, the laboratory has a purified DNA sample suitable for the next stage.



6. PCR identifies the timber

The purified DNA is then subjected to Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR).

PCR amplifies specific DNA regions so that they can be detected and compared.

The laboratory uses primers designed to target DNA sequences relevant to particular timber species.

Muhumuza explains that the laboratory targets the species identified in the documentation and then determines whether the DNA obtained from the exhibit corresponds with that claim.

7. DNA is compared with the database

This is where Uganda's growing timber DNA database becomes particularly important.

The laboratory compares the DNA profile obtained from the timber with reference profiles stored in its database.

Dr Ilukol Chiyo says the database has enabled the laboratory to analyse 74 timber species, providing a growing scientific reference base for investigations.

The power of DNA is that timber that looks similar to another species can potentially be distinguished scientifically.

"In the past, two seeds were found, one bigger and the other smaller, but had the same DNA details of the plant species," Dr Ilukol Chiyo explains, illustrating how genetic evidence can reveal relationships that physical appearance alone may not establish.

8. The scientific result is matched against the paperwork

The laboratory does not work in isolation.

The DNA findings are matched against information contained in documents presented by anti-wildlife and illegal timber enforcement teams, as well as documentation from people transporting or vending timber products.

As Muhumuza explains, the objective is to establish whether the species identified scientifically corresponds with the species declared in the accompanying documents.

Where the scientific findings contradict the documentation, the results can provide investigators with evidence requiring further investigation.

9. The evidence can support prosecution

The final value of timber forensics is not simply identifying a tree species.

It is about generating scientifically credible evidence that can strengthen investigations and, where appropriate, support prosecution of forestry offences. To - date close to 75 suspects are under investigation and at least two trucks loaded with timber were impounded.

Dr Ilukol Chiyo says one timber-related case has already been investigated and another is ongoing at the laboratory, including investigations involving species such as mahogany.

From laboratory science to forest protection

The laboratory represents one part of a broader enforcement chain.

During the 7th Component Technical Committee (CTC) Meeting under the EU-Uganda Forestry Partnership and Programme, members visited the Entebbe laboratory to understand how forensic science is being integrated into Uganda's response to forest and wildlife crime.

The CTC meeting brought together Government institutions, civil society and development partners under the UNODC component of the partnership. The visit highlighted how science can connect forest monitoring, law enforcement, timber traceability, investigations and the justice system.

Bob Kazungu, Assistant Commissioner in charge of Forest Resources at the Ministry of Water and Environment and CTC Chairperson, said the committee's broad membership reflects the need for institutions to work together.

“We must appreciate that these components speak to each other,” Kazungu said.

Jalia Kobusinge, Advisor, Green Transition, Private Sector Team at the EU Delegation in Uganda and CTC Co-Chairperson, called for continued participation by members and greater focus on priorities jointly agreed by the Government of Uganda and the European Union.

For Alejandra Euceda, UNODC Programme Coordinator, Border Management Branch, Programme Office in Uganda, Division for Operations, timber forensics forms part of a wider package that includes strengthening legal frameworks, training investigators and prosecutors, Judiciary training, Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM), corruption-risk management and inter-agency cooperation.

The EU-backed P4F programme specifically aims to strengthen Uganda's forest governance and contribute to increasing protected, restored and sustainably managed forests while reducing deforestation and facilitating sustainable forest-related trade.

The significance of the Entebbe laboratory therefore extends beyond its walls. Every scientifically analysed timber sample can contribute to a larger system in which forest products are increasingly traceable, documentation can be tested against scientific evidence, and investigators have stronger tools to establish the legality or otherwise of timber.

Uganda's investment in timber DNA forensics, supported by the European Union through the Forest Partnership and implemented under the Partnering for Forests Development project, demonstrates a shift toward a more evidence-based approach to forest governance, where protecting forests increasingly depends not only on what enforcement officers see in the field, but also on what science can prove in the laboratory.

Funded by the European Union under the Partnering for Forests Development Programme, the work contributes to Uganda's wider effort to ensure that forests continue to deliver environmental, economic and social benefits while strengthening the systems needed to combat illegal forest exploitation.



GROWING YOUNG GUARDIANS OF UGANDA'S ENVIRONMENT



KALIRO, Uganda – In classrooms, school gardens and newly established woodlots, pupils in Kaliro District are becoming active participants in environmental conservation, helping build a generation with a stronger understanding of forests, natural resources and climate resilience.

For the past 10 years, Mikwano E.V. Uganda, a registered community-based organisation working with Kaliro District Local Government, has promoted environmental conservation through its Kaliro Environment Conservation Project.

The organisation estimates that it has donated about 500,000 tree seedlings over the decade, enabling schools and communities to establish woodlots while encouraging young people to appreciate and protect nature.

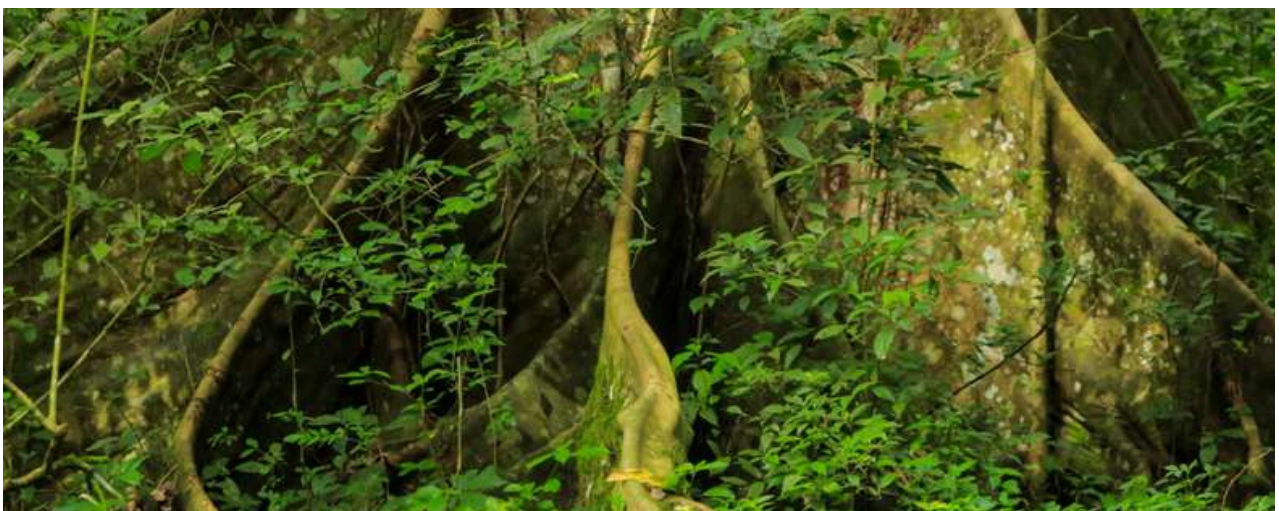


The project has introduced a range of practical conservation initiatives in schools, turning environmental education into hands-on learning.

Among the interventions are food forests, where fruit trees are intercropped with food crops to create productive landscapes that provide both food and environmental benefits.

Woodlots have been established in 10 schools, helping provide sustainable sources of firewood while reducing pressure on natural forests and lowering school fuel costs.

Tree planting ceremony of Hass avocado tree seedling on the Institute compound



The Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) approach has been introduced in five schools, demonstrating how naturally regenerating trees can be protected and managed to restore degraded land without the cost of planting new seedlings.

The project has also supported energy-saving stove initiatives, training pupils and school staff to make and use improved cooking stoves that require less firewood.

In addition, 20 schools have established Green Clubs, giving pupils platforms to share ideas, take leadership roles and participate in practical environmental activities.

The schools also participate in national and international environmental events, including World Environment Day, International Day of Forests, World Wetlands Day, National Tree Planting Day and Uganda Water and Environment Week, combining awareness activities with tree planting.

According to Mugooda Rogers, Executive Director of Mikwano E.V. Uganda, engaging children in conservation is an investment in the future of Uganda's natural resources.

Through these initiatives, Kaliro's schools are demonstrating that environmental conservation can begin with a seedling, a classroom lesson and a child willing to nurture a tree.

Youths Acquire Regenerative Agriculture and Sustainable Agroforestry Skills in Oyam District

The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) was hosted by GAYO and the Youth Climate Council Uganda as part of their Regional Hosting Youth Organization engagements, which promote sustainable agroforestry through Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) in Oyam District.

The engagement brought together youth, local government representatives, community leaders and other stakeholders for discussions and training on climate change, regenerative agriculture and agroforestry.

Participants explored how these approaches can strengthen livelihoods, enhance climate resilience and contribute to environmental sustainability.

The engagement also amplified the ongoing ROOTS campaign, spearheaded by the Department of Forestry Management, which seeks to promote sustainable forest management and increase tree cover through community-led action.

Youth participants were further encouraged to engage with District Forestry Officers to access available government support, technical guidance and resources.

They were also encouraged to formally register their organisations to strengthen their recognition and legitimacy, while improving their access to relevant opportunities, services and government programmes.

SUNReC Boosts Natural Resource Restoration and Refugee-Host Co-existence in West Nile



Arua - Efforts to restore natural resources and strengthen harmonious co-existence between refugees and host communities in the West Nile Sub-region are gaining momentum through the five-year Sustainable Natural Resources Management and Enhanced Refugee-Host Coexistence Project (SUNReC), implemented by the Department of Forestry Management (DFM) under the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE).

This was highlighted during a Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) meeting held at Le Tsuba Hotel in Arua District to review project progress, assess challenges and strengthen implementation. The meeting was officially opened by Mr. Nyeko Milton, Senior Forest Officer, DFM - West Nile Range, who represented the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Water and Environment, and was chaired by SUNReC Project Manager Mr. Igulot Patrick.

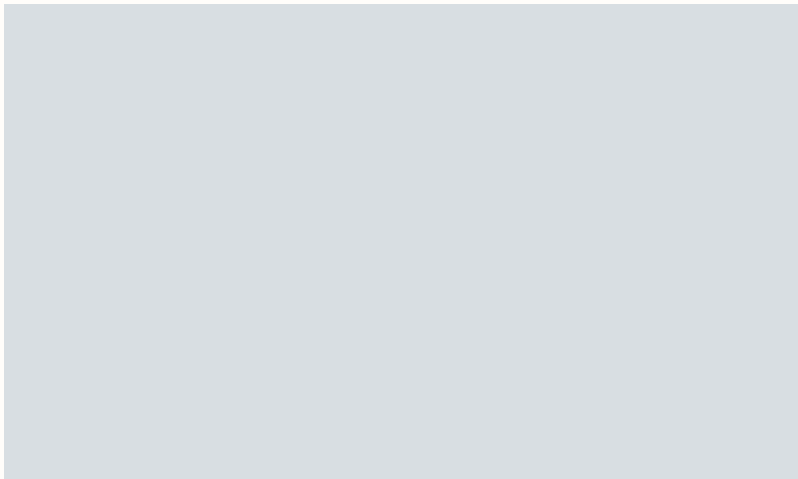
As part of the meeting, stakeholders visited SUNReC intervention sites, including a trial field in Arua Central Forest Reserve (CFR) at Barifa, an individual firewood-production farmer in Arivu Sub - County, and a SUNReC Field School (SFS) in Aciba Village, Omoo Parish.

The Field School, which started in March 2026, has 40 participants - 20 men and 20 women. Training has covered basic tree planting and management, tree-planting designs, SUNReC agroforestry practices, and consideration of gender and socially vulnerable groups.

Farmers and SFS members have received seedlings of Grevillea, clonal Eucalyptus, Melia, Teak and Gliricidia, as well as fruit trees, which were planted during the May - July 2026 rainy season.

The JCC also visited an individual farmer involved in firewood production, highlighting efforts to promote sustainable sources of wood fuel while reducing pressure on natural forests. The interventions are designed to combine environmental restoration with livelihood opportunities for communities.

SUNReC is being implemented across all 12 districts of the West Nile Sub - region, with five pilot districts comprising two refugee-hosting districts, two refugee-affected districts and one project-hosting district.



From Patronage to Partnership: Can the EU Forest Deal Curb Illegal Logging?



ENTEBBE, Uganda – For decades, Uganda’s struggle to protect its forests has involved more than illegal tree cutting. Weak enforcement, inadequate resources, corruption allegations and political interference have repeatedly been identified as governance challenges that undermine forest management. In parts of eastern Uganda, including Busoga, the question is whether a new model of partnership can help shift forest protection from fragmented enforcement to coordinated, evidence-based governance.

The Partnering for Forests Development (P4F) Programme, arising from the Forest Partnership between Uganda and the European Union (EU), is putting governance, law enforcement, traceability and institutional cooperation at the centre of efforts to address forest crime.

Uganda's own forestry governance assessments have previously identified political interference as one of the drivers of forest degradation, while the former National Forestry Authority (NFA) has described poor forest governance as a major challenge to sustainable forest management.

The challenge is not merely historical. Recent reporting from Uganda has continued to document allegations of interference and institutional conflict around illegal timber operations, demonstrating the difficulty of enforcing forestry laws where multiple interests intersect.

Against this background, the 7th Component Technical Committee (CTC) Meeting under the EU-Uganda Forestry Partnership and Programme focused on the contribution of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to strengthening the criminal justice response to forest and wildlife crime.

The meeting, held at the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre (UWEC) Administration Block in Entebbe, brought together Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, civil society organisations and development partners, including the EU, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), Embassy of Denmark in Uganda, Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The CTC was chaired by Bob Kazungu, Assistant Commissioner in charge of Forest Resources at the Ministry of Water and Environment, and co-chaired by Jalia Kobusinge, Advisor, Green Transition, Private Sector Team at the EU Delegation in Uganda.

Kazungu said the broad composition of the committee is intended to address forest crime through institutions working together rather than in isolation.

“We must appreciate that these components speak to each other,” Kazungu said, stressing the need for coordinated action across forestry, justice, law enforcement and environmental institutions.

The partnership is also seeking to strengthen the institutions responsible for managing and protecting forests. NFA reports that during the 2018–2024 period, forest cover increased from 9.9 percent to 12.4 percent, while the Authority recovered 44,702 hectares of forest land from encroachers and restored 22,500 hectares. It also reported that 4,597.1 kilometres of forest boundaries were reopened and demarcated.

These gains, however, exist alongside continuing pressures on Uganda's forest estate and the need for stronger systems capable of preventing illegal harvesting before timber reaches the market.

One of the emerging tools is timber forensics. Following the CTC meeting, participants visited the Timber Forensics Laboratory in Entebbe, where they examined how scientific analysis can help identify timber, establish evidence and support investigations and prosecutions.

For a sector where questions about the origin and legality of timber have historically been difficult to resolve, the laboratory introduces an important link between what happens in the forest and what happens in court.

Jalia Kobusinge called for sustained participation by members of the CTC and greater focus on priorities jointly agreed upon by the Government of Uganda and the European Union.

Her message points to one of the central tests of the partnership: whether meetings and technical commitments can translate into consistent action by institutions responsible for forests, policing, prosecution, courts and trade.

For Alejandra Euceda, UNODC Programme Coordinator, Border Management Branch, Programme Office in Uganda, Division for Operations, strengthening the legal and justice architecture is essential.

Euceda highlighted the review of the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act, development of legal guidance, capacity building for investigators and prosecutors, Judiciary training, timber forensics, Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM), corruption-risk management and improved land management.

She also pointed to stronger inter-agency cooperation and coordination against wildlife crime, including engagement with civil society and cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination along illicit supply chains.

The scale of the problem has previously been reflected in Uganda's forestry policy. The Uganda Forestry Policy notes that poor regulation contributed to increased illegal harvesting, undermining legal markets and reducing government revenues.

The history of illegal logging therefore raises a larger question for the EU-Uganda Forest Partnership: can stronger institutions, technology and coordinated justice systems make it increasingly difficult for illegal timber to move from forest to market?

In Busoga and other forest landscapes, the answer will depend not only on the number of arrests or enforcement operations, but on whether forest boundaries are respected, harvesting is traceable, permits are verifiable, evidence is admissible and institutions can act independently and collaboratively.

P4F's governance approach seeks to connect those pieces, strengthening institutions, improving accountability, supporting enforcement and creating systems for tracking forest products.

The visit to the Timber Forensics Laboratory offered a tangible illustration of that shift: from relying primarily on field enforcement to building an evidence chain that can potentially follow timber from the forest, through transport and trade, to the courtroom.

The partnership is supported by the European Union and implemented with the Government of Uganda and participating institutions and development partners. Its longer-term test will be whether cooperation can translate into stronger forest governance and ensure that Uganda's forests generate economic and environmental benefits without being undermined by illegal exploitation.



Mapping Forests, Strengthening Trust: Uganda Trains Monitors

KAMPALA, Uganda – Uganda is strengthening transparency and accountability in forest management through training in Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) tools, bringing together District Local Governments, civil society organisations, forestry officers and the Partnering for Forests Development (P4F) Secretariat.



The training was organised through a partnership between the European Union, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, Embassy of Denmark and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Government of Uganda, through the Ministry of Water and Environment, under the Forest Partnership and P4F Programme.





Held at Hilton Garden Inn Kampala, the training is equipping participants with practical skills to monitor forest activities, collect field information and use digital tools to improve evidence-based forest governance.

Alejandra Euceda, UNODC Programme Coordinator, Border Management Branch, Uganda Office, who was the chief organiser and facilitator, highlighted the importance of strengthening independent monitoring as Uganda works to improve forestry governance.

The training was also facilitated by Clarence Karanja, Data Specialist, who supported participants in understanding the use of digital data and monitoring tools.

Bob Kazungu, Assistant Commissioner in Charge of Forest Resources at the Ministry of Water and Environment, said transparency remains central to Government's approach to forest management.

"Government of Uganda wants transparency in all it does so that accountability to all stakeholders is smooth, including in the forestry sector," Kazungu said.

Participants included representatives from Masindi, Bushenyi and Mbarara District Local Governments, as well as the Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda (ACCU) and Environmental Alert.

The training moved beyond classroom theory, with participants undertaking practical exercises in tree planting and using digital technology to map trees and record field information.

UNODC experts demonstrated the use of EarthRanger, a digital platform that enables field teams to capture, manage and share geospatial information, including observations made during forest monitoring.

The practical sessions are intended to enable participants to generate reliable evidence from the field that can support forest management, enforcement and accountability.

By combining community and independent monitoring with digital technology, the initiative is strengthening the connection between what happens on the ground and the institutions responsible for protecting Uganda's forests.

The training demonstrates the growing role of partnerships, technology and citizen participation in ensuring that Uganda's forests are better monitored, more accountable and sustainably managed for future generations.



Grant Thornton Uganda Partners with KCCA in CSR Drive to Plant 1,000 Trees in Butabika Hospital.

Grant Thornton Uganda (GTU) is one of the world's largest professional services networks of independent accounting and consulting member firms, providing assurance, tax and advisory services. Beyond business, Grant Thornton Uganda is turning Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into action that benefits communities and the environment. Every September, Grant Thornton member firms around the world come together for dedicated community initiatives. This year, Grant Thornton Uganda set aside two full days to extend its CSR impact beyond the office, engaging in activities ranging from tree planting, blood donation and reaching out to schools to offer support to school children.



Figure 2 Hajjat Green and Catherine Donovan Kyokunda kneeling down to plant a tree at butabika Hospital.

As part of its commitment Grant Thornton Uganda joined with the Running Out Of Trees (ROOTs) Partners, Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) to plant 1000 tree seedlings in Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital, as a way to ensure that environmental conservation and community wellbeing thrives. Amongst the tree seedlings that were planted included 400 *Persea americana*, 250 *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, 170 *Mangifera indica*, 30 *Citrus lemonia*, 137 *Syzygium cumini* and 13 *Grevillea robusta* providing an opportunity to contribute to the restoration of green spaces and promote a culture of environmental stewardship within Kampala.



The event was graced by Catherine Donovan Kyokunda, Commissioner for Legal Services and Board Affairs at the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), and Hajjat Sabyala Aphwa alias Hajjat Green and part of the monitoring and evaluation (M and E) committee of the ROOTs Campaign, attended as special guests.

“Grant Thornton Uganda is in the audit and accounting sector, and one might think that accountants would not care much about the environment. But they are different. Their decision to dedicate their CSR efforts to the environment is commendable. By greening Kampala, they are helping to increase our carbon sinks and contribute to better air quality,” Hajjat Green said during the tree planting exercise.



Hajjat Green also noted that the Training of Trainers on Monitoring and Evaluation, held on 11 September, equipped her and her colleague, Madam Nakalisa, with the skills to map all the trees planted during the exercise. She confirmed the mapping and submission of the records with the forest officer at the Ministry of Water and Environment, Mugisha Adam, who currently manages the Kobo mapping tool for the campaign.

As the ROOTs Campaign and partners continue to strengthen urban greening efforts in Kampala, the city is part of a growing global network of cities committed to building greener, healthier, and more sustainable urban environments.

According to the 2025 Tree Cities of the World recognition by the Arbor Day Foundation and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 283 cities worldwide have been recognized for their commitment to urban forestry. Together, these cities are home to more than 410 million people and plant over 5.8 million trees annually.

Kampala has been part of the Tree Cities of the World program since 2021, recognized for its commitment to tree planting, expanding green spaces, and creating a more sustainable urban environment.

“Yes, as part of our work of greening Kampala and to address the climate change issues, KCCA has taken it upon itself to increase the tree cover for Kampala with partnerships from different organizations like Grant Thornton Uganda and targeting spaces in institutions like Butabika hospital and other spaces in Kampala.” The forest officer at KCCA overseeing greening activities for Nakawa Division, Mr. Tuyambaze Nelson said to this publication.



According to Nelson, Grant Thornton Uganda has been a key pillar in supporting KCCA's greening activities across Kampala, with Butabika being the current site. The firm had earlier collaborated with KCCA through the Landscape Department, which houses Urban Forestry, giving foresters the green light to identify the appropriate tree species and suitable planting sites ahead of the organization's CSR. He noted that the focus is not simply on planting trees, but on planting the right species in the right places to support sustainable urban greening.



This commitment by KCCA to green Kampala aligns well with one of the ROOTs Campaign's strategies, the Miyawaki Method, developed by Japanese botanist and plant ecologist, Akira Miyawaki.

The specialized afforestation technique involves planting a dense and diverse mix of native tree species close together, mimicking the structure and succession of a natural forest to create resilient urban forests. The approach is being explored by the campaign to support the regeneration of green spaces in Uganda's urban areas, with a prototype already thriving at the Ministry of Water and Environment and is expected to go beyond 50 years because of the indigenous choice of tree and will attract multiple biodiversity.



Building Capacity in Digital Monitoring, Reporting and Verification using the Kobo Tool.

In a major push toward data driven environmental conservation, the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee of the Running Out Of Trees (ROOTs) campaign convened at the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) headquarters in Luzira on September 11, 2026, for a comprehensive Training of Trainers (ToT) on the digital Kobo Toolbox platform, with support and coordination from Environmental Alert, the ROOTs Secretariat.



Members at the Ministry of Water and Environment offices during the Kobo tool training

The Roots Campaign operates through a coordinated structure of specialized committees, each playing a vital role in ensuring the success and sustainability of the initiative

These committees work collectively to drive awareness, mobilize resources, and implement activities effectively and these include.

1. The Marketing and Communications Committee, leads public engagement and messaging, while the,
2. Tree Planting Logistics Committee, ensures timely preparation and distribution of tree planting materials.
3. The Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, tracks progress and assesses the impact of interventions.
4. The Events Committee, organizes and executes campaign related events and,
5. The Resource Mobilization Committee which is responsible for mobilizing resources for the campaign.

Together, these committees form the operational backbone of the campaign ensuring strategic planning, transparency, coordination, and impact at all levels. For the session at the Ministry of Water and Environment MWE in Luzira by the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, the session brought together over 20 ROOTs campaign members to strengthen their capability to capture real-time GPS coordinates, geotagged photographs, and verified planting logs directly from mobile devices even in offline environments.

“For the ROOTs campaign, we are strengthening monitoring through Kobo Toolbox and the training of trainers, ensuring that every tree-planting event has trained personnel equipped to capture accurate, verifiable data and demonstrate the campaign’s real impact,” said Bob Kazungu, Assistant Commissioner for Forestry at the Ministry of Water and Environment, during the training.

According to the Asst. Commissioner Bob, he mentioned that the role of the Committee is to capture data, monitor what has been planted, and report on it against health and related parameters.

The training brought together two generations Generation X and Generation Z creating a space where the wisdom of experience met the energy and fresh perspectives of the present. Despite their different experiences and approaches, participants were united by a shared vision: strengthening collaboration, innovation, and collective action to drive the campaign forward.

“Edward’s Deming says, without data, you are just a person with an opinion. The good news is that today we have tools like Kobo Toolbox that allows us to collect this data smartly, efficiently and accurately, and turn it into information that can guide real decisions and action,” Hope Asimwe, Regional Forest Officer (Western Uganda) and UNFCCC Roster of Experts and one of the facilitators of the training said.

Hope also noted that the Running Out Of Trees campaign is using tools like these to collect, monitor and verify tree-growing data in a smarter and more systematic way. These tools help us know what has been planted, where it has been planted and by whom so on and so forth.

Tree mapping is a key part of the campaign’s monitoring and accountability approach with initially making use of the Tree Adoption Application to capture and map information on trees planted in the earlier years, providing a foundation for tracking where trees were planted and monitoring their progress over time.

“Planting trees without monitoring cannot yield tangible results. It’s only through evidence based mapping that we can account for the trees planted. It's important to gain this skill.” Mugisha Adam, Forest Officer at the Ministry of Water and Environment.

The training moved from theory to action as participants took their newly acquired digital monitoring skills into the field. Following a briefing from the Asst. Commissioner Bob Kazungu, the team planted a tree in the Ministry's Miyawaki Forest, then used the Kobo tool to map both the newly planted tree. The hands-on exercise demonstrated how digital mapping can turn tree planting into traceable, evidence-based action, strengthening Monitoring, Verification and Reporting under the Running Out Of Trees campaign.



MWE AC in Charge of Forestry Resources Monitoring and Mapping Bob Kazungu briefing ROOTs members

We also had some opportunity to do some activation of the national tree planting day come 27th November 2026 with the trainers and the leadership of the National Tree Planting Day.

Rotary Club of Kampala Central Drives Fruit-Tree Growing Initiative in Kyankwanzi District

On 9 September 2026, the Rotary Club of Kampala Central took another step towards promoting a greener and more sustainable future with the launch of a fruit-tree growing initiative in Kyankwanzi District. With support from Roofings, the Club donated 3,300 fruit-tree seedlings, while Hon. Patrick Nyanzi Member of Parliament representing Butemba county in Kyankwanzi District supported the initiative by providing transportation for the seedlings.



The initiative seeks to strengthen environmental conservation in schools while providing learners with opportunities to grow fruit trees that can contribute to improved nutrition, practical environmental education, greener school environments and, over time, a source of food and income for schools.

“Our mission is to plant fruit trees across all schools in the country to promote nutrition within the schools and protection of our environment.” Wilson Asimwe, Research Director at the Centre for Social Research and representative of the Rotary Club of Kampala Central, said.

The initiative aligns with the broader objectives of the Running Out Of Trees (ROOTs) campaign, which promotes a shift from simply planting trees to growing, nurturing and protecting them for long-term impact. By introducing fruit-tree growing in schools, the initiative provides an opportunity for learners to become active stewards of trees while connecting environmental conservation with everyday benefits such as nutrition and sustainable livelihoods.



To support the survival and growth of the trees, school environmental clubs will take an active role in monitoring the seedlings, helping to track their progress and identify the care they need. Through regular monitoring, learners will be encouraged to take responsibility for watering, protecting and nurturing the trees, reinforcing the ROOTs principle that planting a tree is only the beginning of its journey.



The involvement of environmental clubs also provides schools with a practical platform for environmental education. Learners can participate in monitoring the trees while gaining hands-on knowledge about tree care, biodiversity, soil and water conservation, climate action and the importance of protecting natural resources. For the ROOTs campaign, such initiatives demonstrate the importance of partnerships in advancing Uganda's tree-growing agenda. Bringing together schools, the private sector, local leadership and environmental actors create a shared responsibility for ensuring that trees planted today are protected and nurtured to deliver benefits for generations to come.

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